

Layfield Children's Centre

Everingham Road, Yarm, Stockton-on-Tees, TS15 9LX

Inspection dates	21–22 January 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The centre's registration figures have risen significantly in the past year. As a result, most families from the reach area are now registered with the centre and have good access to the services it offers.
- The large majority of families from priority groups, including lone parents, teenage parents and those from workless households, maintain regular contact with the centre until their needs are met.
- Partnership working is particularly effective. As a result, the centre provides a wide range of services for families and good outreach support to those families identified as having the most needs.
- Strong partnerships with early years providers and schools are effective, resulting in children being well prepared for school.
- At all levels, leaders, managers and staff are strongly committed to improving services and outcomes for families. Leadership, governance and management arrangements ensure that the centre is continually monitoring and improving the quality and impact of its work.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough workless adults participate in further education, training or activities to improve their chances of employment.
- Evaluation of the impact of activities and services on children's progress is not always precise enough which limits planning for the future.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the opportunities for adults, particularly those from workless homes, to enhance their chances of employment by building stronger links with adult learning and training providers and tracking their participation and progress.
- Ensure that the impact of the centre's work on children's learning and progress is more rigorously evaluated so that outcomes feed purposefully into forward planning, including staff training, services and resources.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager; officers from the local authority and managers of 4Children, the head teacher of the co-located school, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners, including those from health, education, early years and voluntary organisations.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection including; 'Stay and Play' and 'Story and Rhyme' and spoke to children, parents and grandparents.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation and development plan, parent evaluations, key policies including the centre's safeguarding procedures, as well as a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Jean-Marie Blakeley, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Barbara Wearing	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Layfield Children's Centre is situated in Layfield and serves a wide reach area including Layfield, Yarm, Eaglescliffe and Kirklevington. These areas are diverse, but are mostly fairly affluent with the vast majority of housing being private and new housing being built in green areas. One area of social housing is located close to the centre and is ranked as one of the 40% most deprived areas nationally.

4Children is commissioned by Stockton Borough Council to manage the centre in conjunction with an advisory board that includes partners, parents and carers. The centre is led by a cluster manager who is responsible for four children centres. The centre is co-located in the same building as Layfield Primary School and Layfield Daycare and Out of School Club which were not part of this inspection. Their reports are available at www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk. Services are delivered at the centre in Layfield and in partners' premises in the area.

Together with partners, the centre delivers a range of services including family outreach support, parenting programmes, health services and family play sessions.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage. There are approximately 715 children under five years of age living in the community. The majority of children enter early years provision with skills typical for their age. Data show that the number of children living in workless households is around 10%. The centre has identified teenage parents, lone parents and children living in workless households as in most need of its support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- As a result of its successful work with partner organisations and through effective strategies to publicise its services, the centre has been able to register most of the families who live within its reach area. This number has increased significantly in the last eight months, with the large majority of families now known to the centre and accessing its services.
- Information-sharing with professionals from health, social care, education, voluntary organisations and also with the local authority, is good. This enables the centre to identify clearly its key priority groups who are most in need of its support. As a result, the large majority of lone parents, workless families and teenage parents maintain good engagement with the centre.
- Through their effective work within the community and directly with families, and referrals from partners, centre staff accurately identify and prioritise families with the most needs. As a result, there is a good match between families' needs and the services that the centre offers.
- Staff take the opportunity to get to know families when they attend ante-natal appointments held at the centre. There is effective assessment and early identification of needs through ongoing contact with mothers with babies under one year old. As a result, mothers and babies become familiar with the centre and what it has to offer and participate well in activities at the centre.
- Systems to monitor overall registration and participation rates are good. This enables the centre to adjust its services, for example, when sessions or activities are poorly attended or when the need for additional services or targeted services are identified.
- The centre actively promotes free early years education for two-, three- and four-year-olds and most children who are entitled to, take up places. In addition, the recently introduced 'Nearly Nursery' sessions are well regarded. As a result, most children are well prepared when they start nursery or school.

The quality of practice and services**Good**

- The centre offers a wide range of courses and activities to help families improve their health, education and overall life chances. There is a good balance between universal services for all families and more specialised services for 'priority' families, including those provided by partners, such as Home-Start.
- Centre staff assess the needs of families accurately and provide good support. Parents comment very positively about the impact of the support and guidance they receive. As a result, they improve their confidence and are more able to cope with problems that may arise in their lives.
- High-quality case files are maintained due to robust quality assurance systems. Case files demonstrate the good progress made by families receiving support both in the home and at the centre. As a result, inequalities are reducing for these families.
- The centre has good partnerships with schools, childminders and early years providers to help prepare children identified as most in need of support for their transition into nursery or school. Recent data suggest this is beginning to have an impact with those children who regularly access the centre being better prepared to learn when they start school.
- Parents in most need of support benefit from courses and one-to-one support to increase their parenting skills and cope with the demands of a young family. Parents say that this helps with the management of their children's behaviour and relationships within the family.
- Regular contact with the small number of workless families living in the area is maintained and there are good opportunities for parents to volunteer. However, not enough adults access courses, training or services which may help improve their chances of finding employment. Partnerships with adult learning and training providers are not as strong as with other partners. As a result, systems to track adults' participation and progress in partners' provision to help plan future adult learning programmes are not yet fully established.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Good**

- The dynamic centre manager and staff team are passionate about their work and are strongly committed to doing their very best for families and for their local community. They work well together and very productively as a team. Effective staff supervision, performance management and clear work plans have supported the well-qualified team to ensure rapid improvements in registrations of families in the last year.
- The quality of governance, leadership and management is good. At all levels, leaders and managers are highly effective in their roles and provide both support and challenge to the centre. They are well aware of the centre's strengths and areas for further development and take good account of performance data when monitoring the impact of the centre's work. However, managers are aware that systems to record children's progress are not sufficiently precise and do not clearly show specific gaps in children's learning. In addition, the centre does not sufficiently use available data on children's achievements to inform planning, staff training and delivery of sessions.
- The local authority monitors the centre's performance effectively through an annual review process and quarterly monitoring visits. Performance management meetings and targets are set to challenge the centre to do better. All these processes work in conjunction with those of 4Children and the centre's own effective self-evaluation and monitoring and evaluation schedule to improve the impact of its work.
- 4Children ensures that all the required policies and procedures are in place to guarantee equality of opportunity and good safeguarding practice. Staff complete relevant training in safeguarding and have a good understanding of what action to take if they are concerned about the safety of children or parents. They also use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), as appropriate and together with social care partners provide support for children who may be identified as in need or subject to a child protection plan.
- Through their participation on the parents' forum and the advisory board, parents and partners make a good contribution to the work of the centre. Managers constantly seek and value their views and

they help to influence the delivery, design and improvement of services.

- Resources to meet the needs of families are good. Managers use resources well to respond to local priorities, to minimise barriers that lead to inequalities and also to respond to the specific needs of families. Together with the co-located school, they also ensure that the small centre with its shared multi-purpose room is a warm, welcoming and attractive environment for families and visitors.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's centre

Unique reference number	21755
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	454022
Managed by	4Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	715
Centre leader	Sarah Thompson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01642 790826
Email address	s.thompson@4children.org

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